MEREDITH FINCH • IG GUARA
ROSE™
image
#9

The Story So Far...

In the land of Ttereve, magical ability is a death sentence.

Against the advice of both her khat, Thorne, and her knight protector, Sir Dante, Rose negotiates with the priests of Tera to participate in a Ritual of Illumination. Convinced of the priests' good intentions by the presence of her childhood friend Bán, Rose is determined to risk everything in the hope of finding the key to removing Drucilla's collar from Thorne.

In the dungeons of Ttereve, Ila is stunned to discover Prince Felix, long thought dead, a prisoner like herself. With considerable effort, Ila not only manages to convince the despondent prince that the people of Ttereve still need him, but that a Guardian and her khat have awoken to their powers and are desperately in need of his help.

Meanwhile, Drucilla puts a diabolic plan into motion.

The story continues in the next exciting chapter of Rose.

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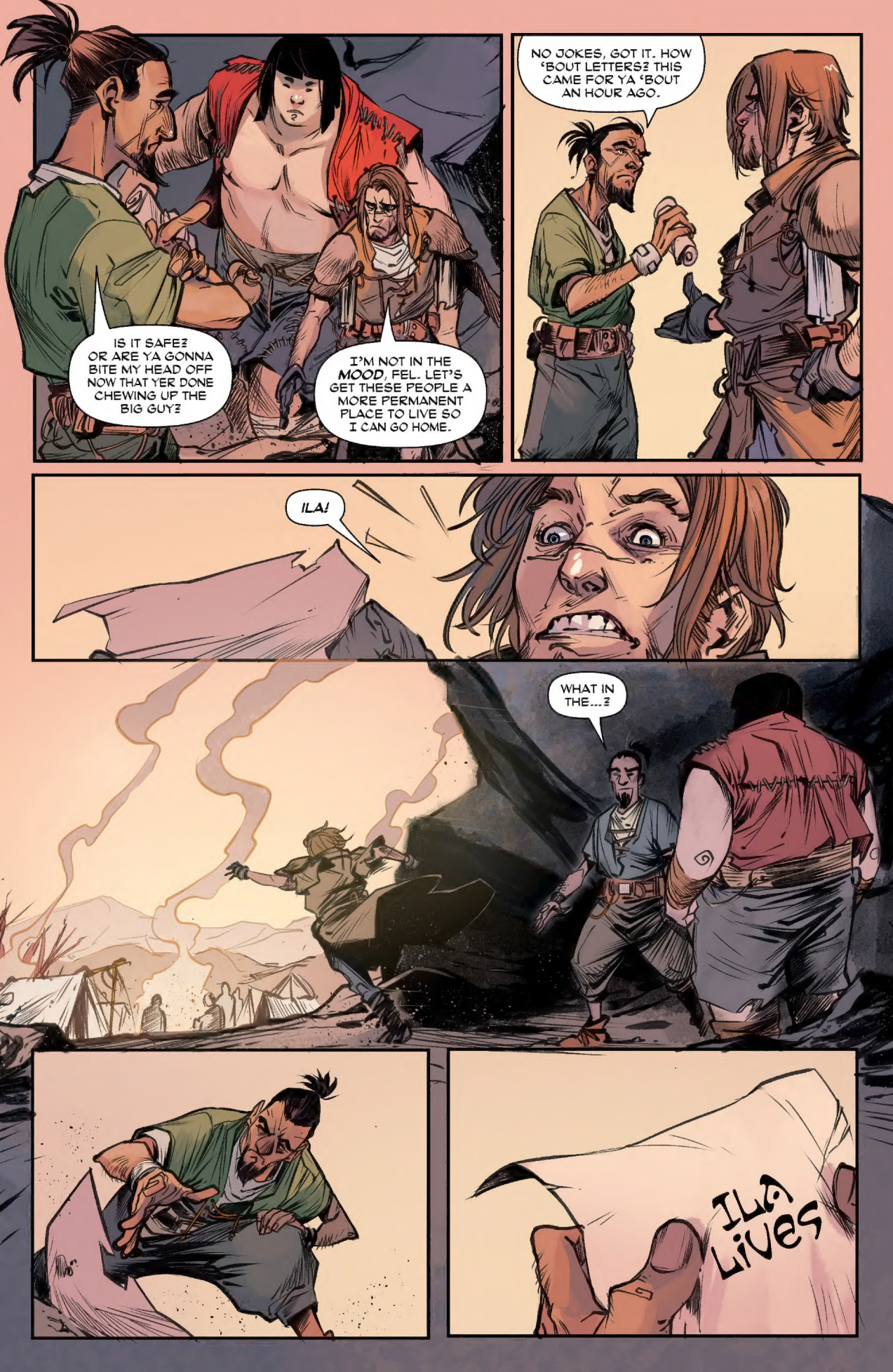
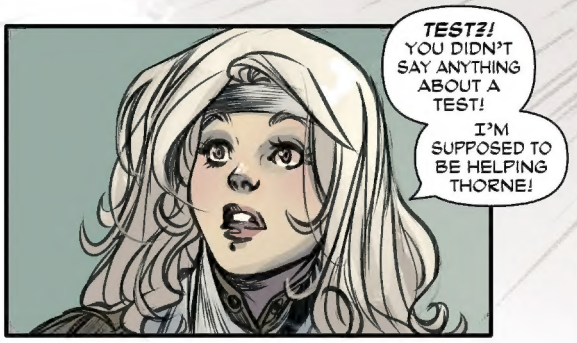
I'M OUTTA IDEAS, BJARKE. WILL AIN'T SAID NOTHIN' SINCE YOU TOLD US 'BOUT ILA. HE JUST SITS THERE...
AN' THIS NOTE JUST CAME FOR 'IM... WHAT IF IT'S SOMETHIN' IMPORTANT?

GO AWAY.
I SAID, LEAVE ME...!
I'M SORRY, BJARKE. BUT WHATEVER YOU CAME TO SAY...IT'S OVER. I WON'T...I CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT ILA.
HELP.
HELP?! HELP WHO, BJARKE?!
ILA WAS OUR ONLY MEANS OF CONTACT WITH THE COUNCIL. SHE KNEW WHO AND WHAT ROSE WAS!
WITHOUT HER... WE MIGHT AS WELL PACK UP AND GO HOME. ANY PART WE HAD TO PLAY IN THIS IS DONE.

YOU WANT ME TO HELP THE PEOPLE OF MILLHAVEN?! IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED...IT'S BECAUSE OF ME THAT THEY'RE HOMELESS!
SHE WAS THE CLOSEST THING TO A MOTHER I'LL EVER KNOW, AND NOW SHE'S GONE.
HELP.
SIGH ALL RIGHT! YOU WIN!
I KNOW SOME CAVES NOT TOO FAR FROM HERE THAT SHOULD WORK. BUT THEN I'M OUTTA HERE.


IS IT SAFE? OR ARE YA GONNA BITE MY HEAD OFF NOW THAT YER DONE CHEWING UP THE BIG GUY?
I'M NOT IN THE *MOOD*, FEL. LET'S GET THESE PEOPLE A MORE PERMANENT PLACE TO LIVE SO I CAN GO HOME.
NO JOKES, GOT IT. HOW 'BOUT LETTERS? THIS CAME FOR YA 'BOUT AN HOUR AGO.
ILA!
WHAT IN THE...?
ILA LIVES

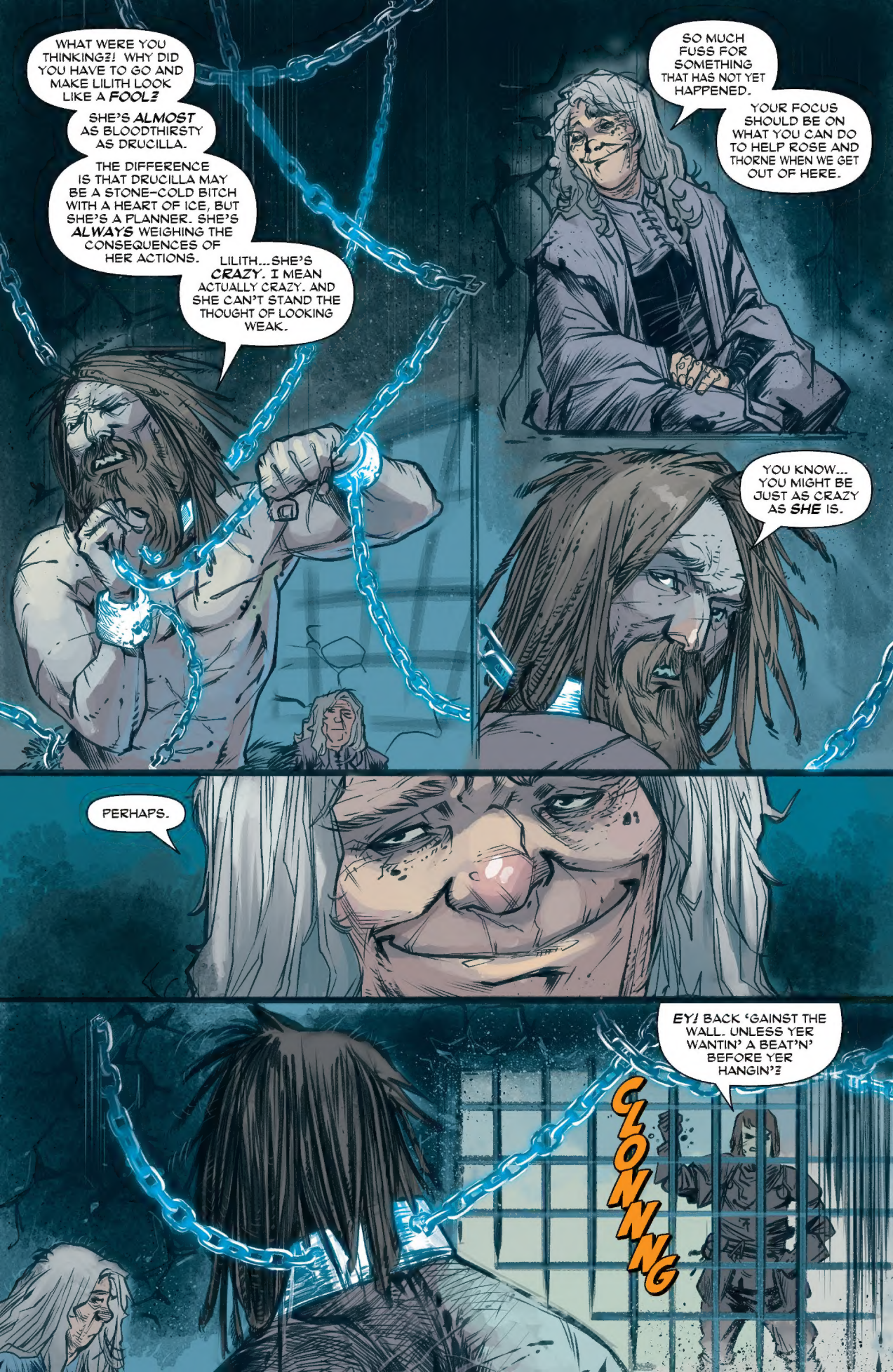
SO WHAT EXACTLY IS A RITUAL OF... WHAT DID YOU CALL IT AGAIN? ILLUMINATION?
WHOLE DAMNED PLACE COULD USE SOME ILLUMINATION.
I CAN'T SEE A BLOODY THING IN HERE.
JUST GIVE IT A MINUTE, SIMON. YOUR EYES WILL ADJUS--
SIMON?! SIR DANTE?
WHAT'S GOING ON?! WHERE'S SIMON?!
THE TEST BEGINS.


TEST?! YOU DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT A TEST!
I'M SUPPOSED TO BE HELPING THORNE!

YOU MUST SEEK THE TRUTH WITHIN, GUARDIAN.
NO! WAIT! DON'T LEAVE!

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?! I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A GUARDIAN YET. BUT WHAT ABOUT THORNE'S COLLAR AND THE RITUAL?!
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO TELL ME WHAT TO DO.

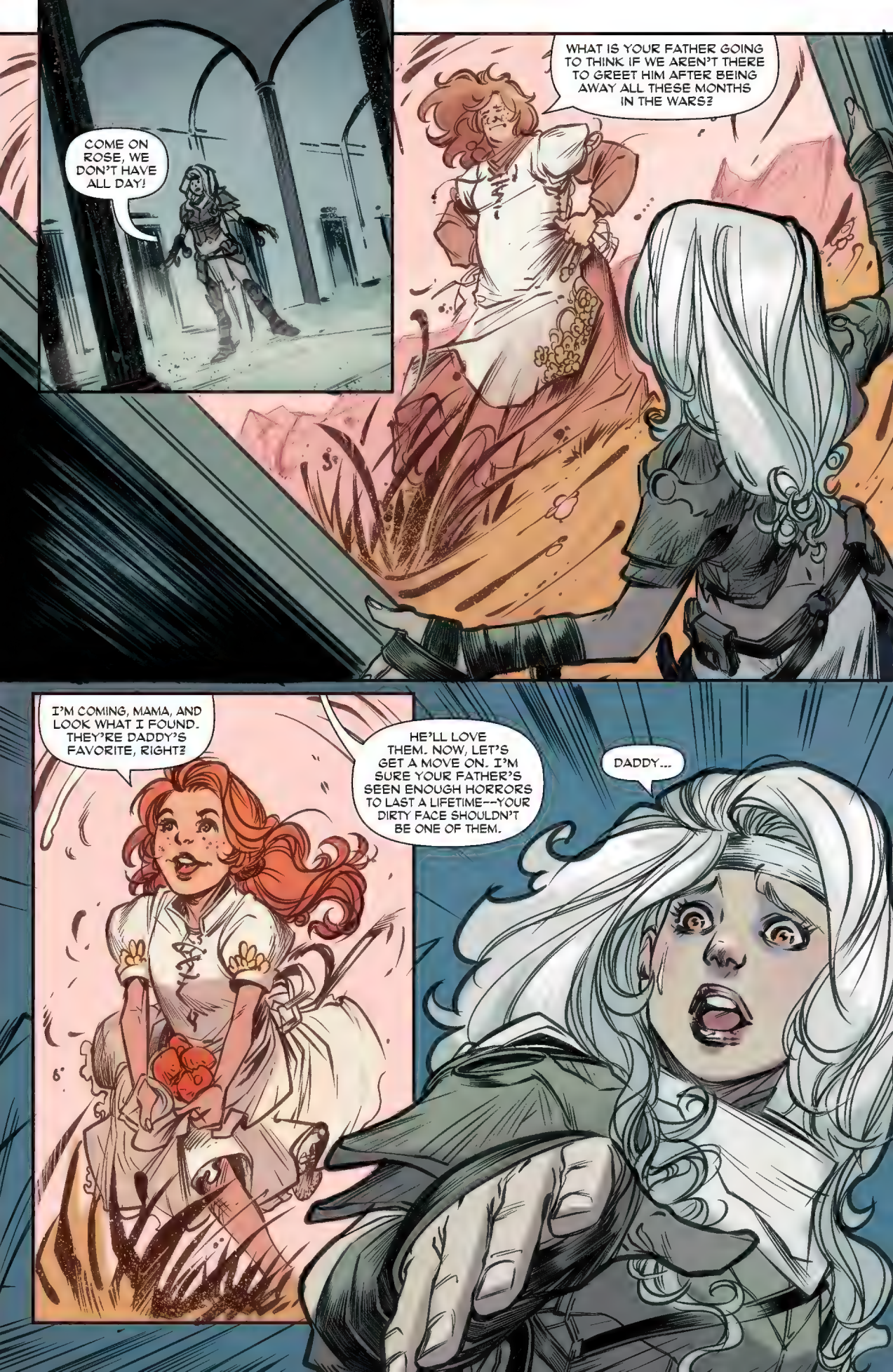
REST AND FIND PEACE, MIGHTY THORNE. WE BELIEVED ALL OF THE KHATZ DISAPPEARED DURING THE DARK WAR. NEWS OF YOUR SURVIVAL HAS BROUGHT MUCH JOY TO OUR HUMBLE SECT.
HOW HAVE THEY MANAGED TO CREATE SUCH AN OASIS IN AN OTHERWISE BARREN LAND?
PERHAPS SIR DANTE WAS RIGHT TO HAVE MISGIVINGS. THERE IS MAGIC HERE. BUT WITH THIS COLLAR ON, BLOCKING MY CONNECTION TO THE EARTH, I AM UNSURE OF ITS INTENT.
WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE DAY WHEN ALL THE LAND OF TTEREVE CAN ONCE AGAIN FLOURISH UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF A GREAT KHAT AND HIS GUARDIAN.
CLANG

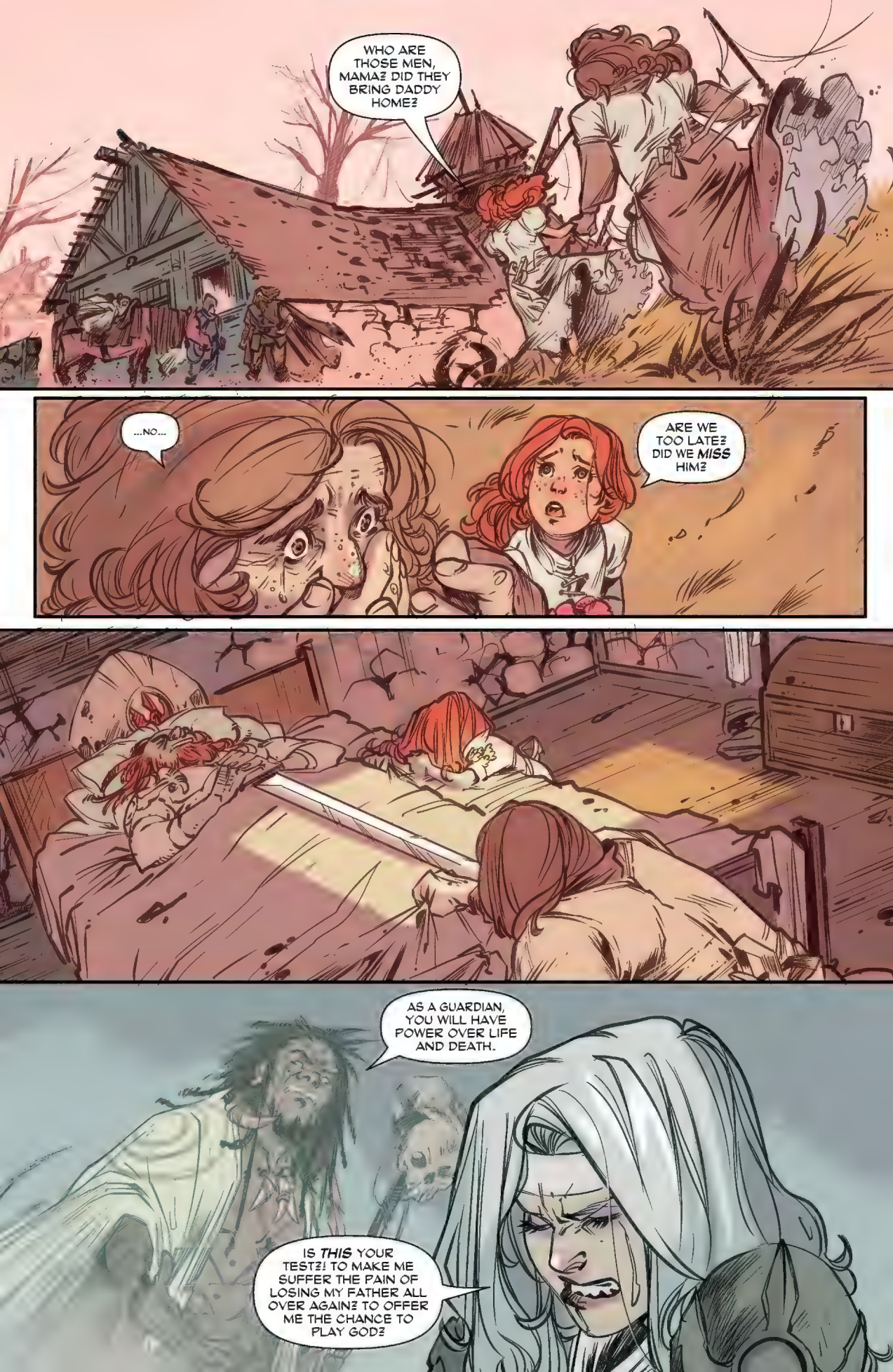

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?! WHY DID YOU HAVE TO GO AND MAKE LILITH LOOK LIKE A FOOL?
SHE'S ALMOST AS BLOODTHIRSTY AS DRUCILLA.
THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT DRUCILLA MAY BE A STONE-COLD BITCH WITH A HEART OF ICE, BUT SHE'S A PLANNER. SHE'S ALWAYS WEIGHING THE CONSEQUENCES OF HER ACTIONS.
LILITH...SHE'S CRAZY. I MEAN ACTUALLY CRAZY. AND SHE CAN'T STAND THE THOUGHT OF LOOKING WEAK.
SO MUCH FUSS FOR SOMETHING THAT HAS NOT YET HAPPENED.
YOUR FOCUS SHOULD BE ON WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP ROSE AND THORNE WHEN WE GET OUT OF HERE.
YOU KNOW... YOU MIGHT BE JUST AS CRAZY AS SHE IS.
PERHAPS.
EY! BACK 'GAINST THE WALL. UNLESS YER WANTIN' A BEAT'N' BEFORE YER HANGIN'?
CLONNNG

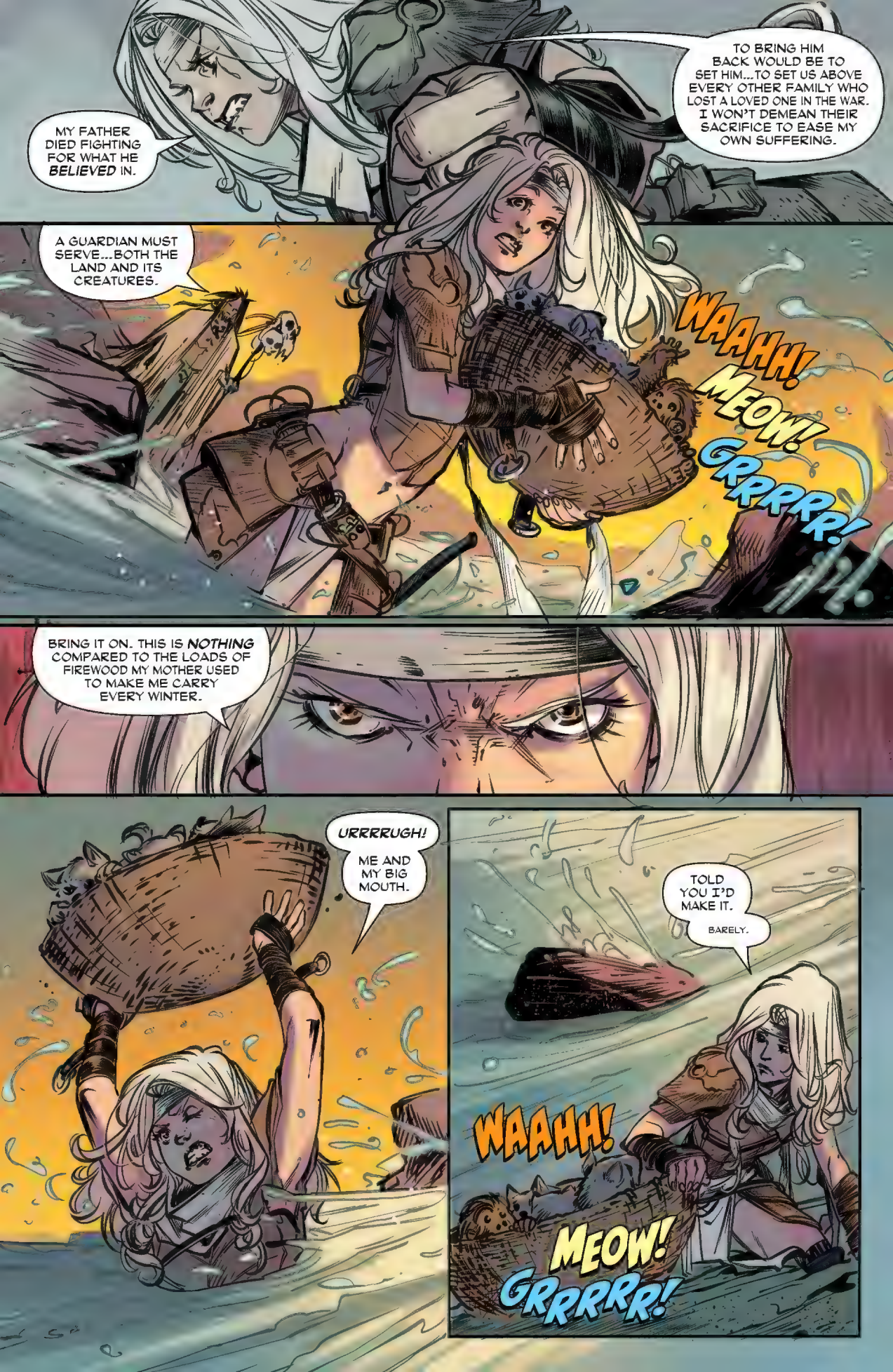
ON YOUR FEET, MAGGOTS! GENERAL'S ON DECK.
THE PEOPLE OF TTEREVE SEEM TO HAVE FORGOTTEN THE PRICE OF REBELLION.
BUT THEY'RE ABOUT TO GET A REMINDER.
WHEN THE QUEEN MAKES AN EXAMPLE OF HER BROTHER...
IT LOOKS LIKE YOUR USEFULNESS HAS COME TO AN END, PRINCELING.

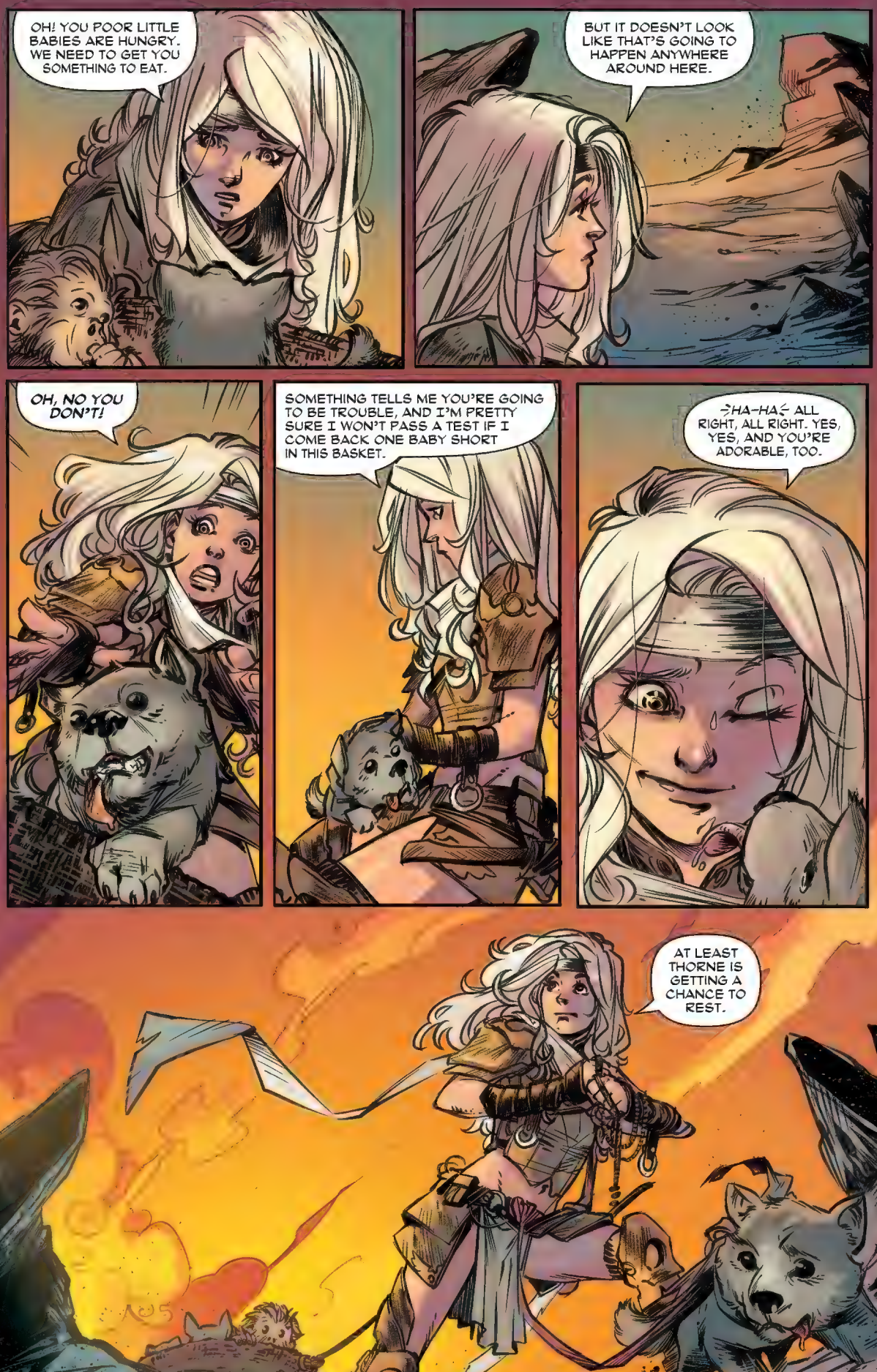
SNIFF WHAT HAVE I DONE? SIMON AND THORNE BOTH TRIED TO WARN ME, BUT I WOULDN'T LISTEN. AND NOW... *SNIFF*...THEY'RE BOTH GONE.
WHAT IF SIMON WAS RIGHT AND THEY'RE JUST TESTING TO SEE HOW LONG IT TAKES FOR QUEEN DRUCILLA TO GET HERE AND KILL ME?
AND THORNE?! SHE'LL TURN HIM AGAINST EVERYTHING HE CARES ABOUT.
BUT... *SNIFF*... BÁN. HE WOULDN'T HURT ME. HE'S MY FRIEND.
MAYBE THIS IS THE TEST. MAYBE THIS WHAT I NEED TO DO...TO LEARN HOW TO USE MY POWER TO FREE THORNE.
HE SAID I WOULD FIND THE ANSWERS I SEEK WITH THE RITUAL OF ILLUMINATION. WHAT IF THIS TEST IS PART OF THE RITUAL?
OKAY, BÁN. I'M READY. SHOW ME WHAT TO DO.
ROSE! ROSE, WHERE ARE YOU?

MAMA? MAMA, IS THAT YOU?
FWAP
FWAP
FWAP
THANK YOU, MY FRIEND.
I'M COMING, MAMA.


COME ON ROSE, WE DON'T HAVE ALL DAY!
WHAT IS YOUR FATHER GOING TO THINK IF WE AREN'T THERE TO GREET HIM AFTER BEING AWAY ALL THESE MONTHS IN THE WARS?
I'M COMING, MAMA, AND LOOK WHAT I FOUND. THEY'RE DADDY'S FAVORITE, RIGHT?
HE'LL LOVE THEM. NOW, LET'S GET A MOVE ON. I'M SURE YOUR FATHER'S SEEN ENOUGH HORRORS TO LAST A LIFETIME--YOUR DIRTY FACE SHOULDN'T BE ONE OF THEM.
DADDY...


WHO ARE THOSE MEN, MAMA? DID THEY BRING DADDY HOME?
...NO...
ARE WE TOO LATE? DID WE MISS HIM?
AS A GUARDIAN, YOU WILL HAVE POWER OVER LIFE AND DEATH.
IS THIS YOUR TEST?! TO MAKE ME SUFFER THE PAIN OF LOSING MY FATHER ALL OVER AGAIN? TO OFFER ME THE CHANCE TO PLAY GOD?


MY FATHER DIED FIGHTING FOR WHAT HE BELIEVED IN.
TO BRING HIM BACK WOULD BE TO SET HIM...TO SET US ABOVE EVERY OTHER FAMILY WHO LOST A LOVED ONE IN THE WAR. I WON'T DEMEAN THEIR SACRIFICE TO EASE MY OWN SUFFERING.
A GUARDIAN MUST SERVE...BOTH THE LAND AND ITS CREATURES.
WAAHH!
MEOW!
GRRRRR!
BRING IT ON. THIS IS NOTHING COMPARED TO THE LOADS OF FIREWOOD MY MOTHER USED TO MAKE ME CARRY EVERY WINTER.
URRRRUGH!
ME AND MY BIG MOUTH.
TOLD YOU I'D MAKE IT.
BARELY.
WAAHH!
MEOW!
GRRRRR!


OH! YOU POOR LITTLE BABIES ARE HUNGRY. WE NEED TO GET YOU SOMETHING TO EAT.
BUT IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN ANYWHERE AROUND HERE.
OH, NO YOU DON'T!
SOMETHING TELLS ME YOU'RE GOING TO BE TROUBLE, AND I'M PRETTY SURE I WON'T PASS A TEST IF I COME BACK ONE BABY SHORT IN THIS BASKET.
-HA-HA- ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT. YES, YES, AND YOU'RE ADORABLE, TOO.
AT LEAST THORNE IS GETTING A CHANCE TO REST.

BANNNGGGG!
GRRRORROW!
I WILL NOT BE LOCKED AWAY AGAIN IN A PRISON NOT OF MY OWN CHOOSING.
BAM!
I WILL NOT BE SEPARATED FROM MY GUARDIAN AGAIN! NOT NOW THAT I HAVE FOUND HER!
TTTHOOORRRNE!
YOU KNOW WE WERE MEANT FOR EACH OTHER.
RRRRRRRRR

DRUCILLA!
YOU KNEW IT ALL THOSE YEARS AGO. YOU KNOW IT NOW.
WHY FIGHT DESTINY? COME TO ME, THORNE. I'VE BEEN WAITING SO VERY, VERY LONG.
YOU WEAR MY COLLAR NOW, THORNE, JUST AS YOU ALWAYS KNEW YOU WOULD.
WHAT POWER DOES YOUR PUNY GUARDIAN HAVE COMPARED TO THE POWER OF THE GREATEST SORCERESS IN TTEREVE?
RRROWWAW!
THORNE!
WHAT HAS COME OVER YOU?
...YOU...

HOW? HOW COULD SHE DO IT? WE'RE TWINS, WE SHARED THE SAME WOMB...WET NURSE.
HELL, I'M PRETTY SURE WE'VE EVEN SHARED THE SAME WOMAN.
SURE, SHE'S TORTURED ME, STARVED ME, KEPT ME LOCKED AWAY ALL THESE YEARS, BUT I ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT, SOMEWHERE DEEP DOWN INSIDE, THERE WAS A PART OF HER THAT STILL LOVED ME.
...THAT WAS WHY SHE DIDN'T KILL ME THE NIGHT SHE MURDERED OUR FATHER AND BROTHERS...THAT IT WASN'T JUST BECAUSE I WAS THE ONLY PERSON WHO KNEW WHERE THORNE WAS.
JUST AS SURE AS I AM THAT THERE IS A PART OF HER THAT DOES LOVE YOU, I AM SURE THAT IS THE REASON WHY SHE HAS MARKED YOU NOW FOR DEATH. YOU ARE HER LAST LINK TO HER HUMANITY.
TO PROTECT HERSELF FROM PAIN, YOUR SISTER HAS EMPTIED HER HEART OF FEELING. SHE HAS LOCKED IT AWAY. BUT A HEART SAFE IS A HEART CHANGED.
IT WILL NOT BE BROKEN, IT WILL BECOME UNBREAKABLE, IMPENETRABLE, IRREDEEMABLE.*
LEWIS, C.S., THE FOUR LOVES.
IT IS CHOICES OF THE HEART THAT DETERMINE THE COURSE OF A LIFE, MY PRINCE.
WHAT CHOICE WILL YOUR HEART MAKE?

I TOLD YOU BEFORE, ESCAPE IS *IMPOSSIBLE*. I GREW UP IN THIS CASTLE. I KNOW ITS EVERY SECRET. THERE IS SIMPLY NO WAY...
HUSH! SOMEONE COMES.
D...D...D... DINNER.

GIMME THAT! 'BOUT TIME YOU GOT HERE.
HEY! WHERE'S MINE?!
S...S...SORRY. C...C...COOK O... ONLY S...S...SENT THE...THE ONE TRAY.
ONE TRAY OF PISS, LOOKS LIKE...OR MAYBE THAT'S ALL YA COULD BE BOTHERED T' CARRY?!
THAT'S FOR BEIN' A LAZY ASS, MUSH MOUTH!
THWACK
I'LL SHOW THAT FAT ARSE OF A COOK WHAT'S WORTH EATIN'!
HAHAHA! GO GET 'IM, KAI! SHOW THAT COOK-Y WHAT FOR.
ERCK!
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE SHOWING ANYONE ANYTHING ANYMORE.
CRASH!

ILA? ILA WHERE ARE YOU?
HOW ABOUT RIOTS? BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ABOUT TO TURN INTO.
I DO NOT BELIEVE IN IMPOSSIBLE.
ARTUS. OVER HERE. QUICKLY.
ARTUS GREY! WHAT THE NAME OF HEAVEN ARE YOU DOING HERE?! YOUR MOTHER WOULD NOT THANK ME FOR RISKING YOUR LIFE IN SUCH A WAY.
THANKS TO QUEEN DRUCILLA, I NO LONGER HAVE A MOTHER TO WORRY ABOUT THE RISKS I TAKE.
NO! NOT ABIGAIL!

IF YOU WANT TO LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE THIS GUARDIAN YOU CLAIM TO HAVE FOUND, THEN MOVE NOW, CRY LATER.
THIS WAY. I'VE GOT SOME HORSES WAITING FOR US ONCE WE GET PAST THE MAIN GATE.
ILA, WAIT!
THIS CASTLE IS *FULL* OF SECRETS AND PITFALLS. IF YOU WANT TO GET OUT ALIVE, *I'LL* TAKE IT FROM HERE.

NEXT MONTH

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HENDERSON GARBETT FABELA BOWLAND

SKYWARD

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SNEAK PREVIEW

MORNING, JOAN!
WILLA! CHECK THIS OUT.
I FOUND IT WHEN I WAS LEAVING WORK.
ISN'T IT HILARIOUS? I WONDER WHAT IT MEANS.
SO WEIRD.
CROSSING AHEAD

HI EDISON.
YOU'RE OLDER THAN ME, RIGHT?
NOT SUPER OLDER. YOU'RE NOT *OLD*, I MEAN. BUT YOU'RE OLD*ER* THAN ME.
RIGHT?
YEAH. WHY?

DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT THE WORLD WAS LIKE WITH GRAVITY?
I DO.
HOW WAS IT? DID PEOPLE HATE NOT BEING ABLE TO FLY?
I THINK I WOULD HAVE GONE CRAZY. NOT BEING ABLE TO GO *UP*?
WHAT WAS WALKING LIKE?
I CAN'T ANSWER THAT ONE.
OH GOD. I'M SORRY. I FORGOT ABOUT YOUR LEGS--

CONTINUED IN SKYWARD #1, APRIL 2018

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Moonstruck™ VOLUME 1

Grace Ellis Shae Beagle

McCubbin Quirk Cowles

MARCH 2018

"I genuinely loved the world Ellis and Beagle created. Their storytelling presents a creative way to talk about 'otherness' and self-acceptance. Most importantly, it's really fun."

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— *Entertainment Weekly*

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